



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

discovered Old Saxon fragments (*vide Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, Heidelberg, 1894, p. 242, l. 3).

386-7.—

*Bēo þū on ofeste, hāt in gān,  
sēon sibbe-gedriht samod ætgædere*

Surely something has been gained in the consent of the critics to refer *sibbe-gedriht* to the *Gēatas*. But Bugge's attempt to justify *sēon* (*Beiträge*, xii, 86) will hardly meet approval, nor is the less conservative suggestion of ten Brink (*Untersuchungen*, p. 53, note: *hāt in gan(gan) (on) sæl sibgedriht*) to be regarded as anything more than an indication of the correct sense of the lines. The text has suffered in transmission, and the method of restoration is suggested by *Exodus*, l. 214: *eall sēo sibgedriht somod ætgædere*. I accordingly reduce *sēon* to *sēo*. This gives a subject in the nominative singular for *gān*. It is therefore clear that *gān* too must be changed. The metre requires a dissyllable as in l. 1645 (*Beiträge* x, 268-9, 313, 477), and the nominative subject requires a finite verb which after *hāt* must be subjunctive and introduced by *þæt* (cf. *Genesis*, l. 500: *hēt þæt þū pisses ofætes æte*). The lines may therefore be read as follows:

*Bēo þū on ofeste, hāt [þæt] in gā  
sēo sibbe-gedriht samod ætgædere*

Here *gā* (Subjunctive) is metrically equivalent to *gāē*, just as *gān* (l. 1645) is equivalent to *gāēn*. It is possible that *ga* became *gān* *πρὸς τὸ σημαίνονμενον*, the plural verb looking to the implied plural of the collective *sēo sibbe-gedriht*—a possible process by which the originally singular verb came to be transmitted as a plural. The form *gān* may then have occasioned the change of *sēo* to *sēon*.

623.—*sinc-fato sealde*. The context does not favor the translation 'gave costly gifts.' Banning (*Die epischen Formeln im Beowulf*, Marburg, 1886, p. 5) rightly regards the expression as an epic formula for passing the cup ("den Becher reichen").

737.—*Ofer þā niht*. Heyne's translation of this phrase by 'die Nacht hindurch,' 'die Nacht über' represents its generally accepted interpretation; Earle is however right in translating it by 'after that night.' This meaning

and use of *ofer* is that which is noted in the Bosworth-Toller *Dictionary*, s. v. i (8). The Rubrics of the Gospels furnish many instances: e. g. Luke, v, i, *Dis [godspel] sceal on þone syxtan sunnandæg ofer pentecosten*.

JAMES W. BRIGHT.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY IDEA OF HUMOURS.

SYMONDS, writing of Ben Jonson's time, says: "At this date humour was on everybody's lips to denote whim, oddity, conceited turn of thought, or special partiality in any person"; and again, "The word had become a mere slang term for any eccentricity." Jonson, annoyed by the inexact popular use of the word defines it—:

"So in every human body,  
The choler, melancholy, phlegm, and blood,  
By reason that they flow continually  
In some one part, and are not continent,  
Receive the name of humours. Now thus far  
It may by metaphor, apply itself  
Unto the general disposition:  
As when some one peculiar quality  
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw  
All his effects, his spirits, and his powers,  
In their confluxions, all to run one way,  
This may be called a humour."

To fix the source and trace the growth of this use, now practically obsolete, has the difficulty common to all such study; first, lack of material bearing directly upon the history of humours and second, the necessity for a wide view of the times in order to fix this subject in its right relation to other phenomena. We have of course two possible sources for the seventeenth century idea of "humours," as mirrored in the characters of Ben Jonson's plays. It may be a native English growth or it may be transplanted from foreign shores. If we say it is simply a modification of the personified virtues and vices of the Moralities and Interludes of the early sixteenth century we gain little, for it is probable that the Moralities and Interludes came from France, and the problem is by that hypothesis only transferred to French soil.

It is doubtless, in the sixteenth century that we must look for hints as to the origin of

Jonson's "humours"; but let us first look for a moment at a form of literature which appeared in England in the seventeenth century and which is so closely connected with our subject that the two may, perhaps, be considered as one, that is, the Character writing of which Jonson himself gives us brief examples in the characters prefixed to *Every Man out of His Humour*. This kind of composition was remarkably frequent in the first thirty-five years of the seventeenth century, a period coinciding with the working years of Jonson's life. In these years were published the seventy-six Characters of Earle's *Micro-cosmography*, the seventy-nine of Overbury, twenty-eight by Joseph Hall, forty-nine by Nicholas Breton, and collections by Saltonstall, Parrott, Minshull, Stephens, and others; beside anonymous collections, such as the *Surfeit to A.B.C.*; *Whimzies*, and *Micrologia*.

Examples of this kind of writing occur in England as early as 1567, when Thomas Harmon published his twenty-four Characters; and as late possibly as 1680, in the eighty-four of Samuel Butler.

In these Characters we have only another presentation of the Humours, as Jonson calls them, and their simultaneous appearance and wide popularity are significant and interesting, particularly as they die away together at the end of the seventeenth century.

Is there any influence bearing on the last half of the sixteenth century which may account for this popularity, and which at the close of the seventeenth century ceased to act?

Two thousand years ago in Greece, Character writing was perhaps the fashion too. In the works long known as Aristotle's are included some character sketches so like those of two hundred years ago that they might be by the same hand; and Theophrastus, Aristotle's pupil and favorite, wrote what he called *Ἠθικὰ χαρακτήρες*.

We have only to prove that these Greek models were first brought to the notice of the English in the sixteenth century and that they became widely known and popular to find, not only the probable origin of English Character writing, but also the origin of the popular idea of Humours, which Jonson crystalized for us.

If Greek was known to the English before the Middle Ages, it seems to have been used only in the service of religion and in the study of the Testament in the original.

"By a knowledge of Greek when we find it asserted of a mediæval theologian," says Hallam, "we are not to understand an acquaintance with the great classical authors, but the power of reading some petty treatise of the fathers, an apocryphal legend, or at best some of the later commentators on Aristotle."

Whatever knowledge the English may at one time have had, died out; and the schools, though teaching the logic of Aristotle, received it through a Latin translation and applied it to theological disputations. When the Renaissance came to Europe breaking up the church influence, with which logic was then associated, and turning men's minds to other kinds of learning, and to Aristotle's other works, Aristotle was still all in all. What is true of England in this, is true, with modifications, of all western Europe.

In 1423, John Aurispa, of Sicily, brought to Italy two hundred and thirty-eight manuscripts from Greece. It was the first notable step. Filelfo followed with more, in 1427. In 1453, after the capture of Constantinople, many Greeks came to Italy, and in the middle of the fifteenth century it was recorded as a matter of special note that two learned Greeks translated certain ancient works into Latin. Cardinal Bessarion undertook Theophrastus and parts of Aristotle, and John Argyropulus the works of Aristotle. A Greek grammar was written by Lascaris, 1476, others followed: Craston's Lexicon appeared in 1480; and, in 1510, Erasmus was teaching Greek at Cambridge, though he had only a few pupils and his instructions were confined to the grammar. A Latin translation of the *Ethics of Aristotle* was printed, for the first time in England, in 1479, at Oxford. So we may fairly conclude that England at large knew nothing of Theophrastus and little of Aristotle before the opening of the sixteenth century.

But soon after that the new learning met an enthusiasm which overwhelmed every other branch of learning. Hallam speaking of the years between 1520 and 1550 says: "What the doctors of the Middle Ages had been to

theology, that was Aristotle in all physical and speculative science."

"To the conspicuous cultivators of polite literature he was indebted for appearing in a purer text and in more accurate versions, nor was the criticism of the sixteenth century more employed on any other writer."

So we are not surprised to find in the Autobiography prefixed to the Diary of Mr. James Melville, who was sent to St. Andrews College in his fourteenth year: "I . . . enterit under the regenterie of . . . Mr. Wilyeam, who haide the estimation of the most solid and learnit in Aristotle's Philosophie." The works of Aristotle were his principal text books and in the third year of his course he takes "the fyve buikis of the Ethiks and the aught buikis of the Physiks."

Harrison, a writer of the times complains of the laziness of "rich mens sons" who "study little but histories and dice and trifles"; and we are told that in 1565 Elizabeth makes orations, at the Colleges, in classic tongues; "To the great comfort of all such as have been students there"; and Ascham says, that Edward VI. read the Ethics in Greek. Some indirect evidence of this devotion to Greek is given by Ben Jonson, whose characters when they wished to be fine pretend to Greek learning. Notice Clove in *Every Man out of His Humour*.

Since, then, we find the period of the highest popularity of Greek study in England to coincide with that of Character writings, and of popular discussions of Humours, as in Ben Jonson, may we not infer that the writers of that day sought to please a public taste which recognized no model but Aristotle by copying the lighter of the works attributed to him, bringing them up to date, if I may use the expression.

It is of interest to notice further that this style of writing went out of fashion at precisely the time when doubt and discredit were brought on Aristotle by physical discoveries. A new science and a new philosophy, represented to us by the names of Galileo, and Newton, Bacon, and Descartes, Harvey, and Kepler, arose, and interest in Greek learning wanes first when the Character writings are fewer and fewer and the allusions to Humours more difficult to find.

The idea of humours was not confined to England; the term itself is used, for instance, in the introductions prefixed to the plays in earlier editions of Molière. (They sound indeed much as if written for Ben Jonson's plays.) Rabelais uses the word in the title of a short poem. La Bruyère (1639-1696) translated the *Ἠθικὰ χαρακτῆρες* of Theophrastus and wrote Characters of his own.

A careful examination of the literature of France and Germany for this period would probably show a rise and fall of Character and Humour writing commensurate with that in England, and would add to the evidence as to the source of a fashion which, though apparently a trifling thing, brings us into immediate touch with the great Renaissance movement.

M. A. HARRIS.

New Haven.

#### THE VERB IN THE "MORTE D'ARTHUR."\*

PROFESSOR HEMPL, in his article on my *Inflections and Syntax of Malory's Morte d'Arthur*, has printed from Doctor Norton's unpublished verb-lists several valuable corrections of my own lists. He adds some questions which the present paper aims to answer. It should be said, however, that citations are given in my grammar, (1) for rare forms, (2) to show which of two parallel forms is the more common. Further citation seemed unnecessary and cumbrous. The following notes proceed in the order of Professor Hempl's article.

##### REDUPLICATING VERBS, §133.

*drede*. The double forms for the preterit of this verb are cited among weak verbs at §163. This is the rule wherever a verb was found to have passed over entirely to the weak conjugation. For this reason the verbs *bowe*, *flee*, *lese*, *lye* (to speak falsely), *shote*, cited by Doctor Norton, are omitted from Class ii, and *brenne* from Class iii. And since these verbs except in sporadic forms, were weak even in Chaucer, they are not mentioned at §153.

##### THE WEAK VERBS, §§162, *seq.*

*causeth*, 344, 35 may be plural, (cf. Chaucer

\*See MOD. LANG. NOTES, vol. ix, p. 479.